

PORTRAITS OF PARTNERSHIP

Common Vision
Shared Values
Joint Action



U.S. EMBASSY SOFIA

Letter from the Ambassador



April was a month of summits and anniversaries, and one where Bulgaria stood tall on the world stage. The spotlight began on NATO and the transatlantic partnership, and ended with Sofia in the international spotlight as President Parvanov hosted leaders from throughout Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East for an Energy Summit – “Natural Gas for Europe: Security and Partnership.”

Summit leaders agreed on an important Declaration which enshrined essential core principles: diversity, transparency, and the primacy of market forces in determining new projects. Bulgaria took a major step forward by inviting the founder of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative -- EITI -- to speak at the Summit's associated Business Forum. The U.S. delegation, led by newly appointed Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy Richard Morningstar, had very productive meetings with President Parvanov, Prime Minister Stanishev, Foreign Minister Kalfin, and Economy and Energy Minister Dimitrov as well as with numerous heads of state and ministers from participating countries. We highlighted our support for secure, reliable, and diverse sources of supply and transit for Bulgaria and Europe, and that projects and pipelines based on sound business models and meeting international standards for transparency and accountability are best equipped to succeed in today's competitive markets. That, in turn, will help lead to stronger and more sustainable economic growth and better stewardship over the environment.

In May, the Embassy will host a major conference on alternative and efficient energy in Sofia. This will bring together Bulgarian companies with U.S. manufacturers and investors ready to help meet the growing needs here. Bulgaria is the least energy efficient country in the EU; our aim is to help turn that around. U.S. firms and U.S. technology are at the forefront of alternative and renewable energy projects as well as energy efficiency solutions. Investments here will generate well paying jobs and reduce Bulgaria's reliance on imported energy while also helping reduce environmental degradation. Within the Embassy, we are also reviewing what we can do as citizens of this city. We have in place many efficient and energy-friendly systems, leading us to be named the first “Green Embassy” in Europe. We've even added an ecology-friendly PRIUS automobile to our vehicle fleet. “Going Green” is not just a slogan – it's a lifestyle, and our embassy in Sofia is living proof that green is possible. I welcome you to view the link below just to see some of the simple, yet effective, steps we've taken and hope others will follow.

My family and I look forward to enjoying the beautiful spring weather in the coming weeks. The Embassy will host several free concerts by American musicians in Sofia and other cities, and we hope that all our friends will be able to attend.

Visit the Ambassador's [video profile](#) to learn more.

Visit the Ambassador's [page](#).

Visit us on [YouTube](#)!

New!! Watch our [Green Embassy video](#)! **New!!**

U.S. Ambassador Awards Highest Honor to Two Brave Women

On April 28, in a hall filled with their colleagues and admirers, Ambassador McElDowney awarded the “Women of Courage” award to two Bulgarian women who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the protection of Intellectual Property. In recognizing Ms. Ilona Krastenyakova, an IPR prosecutor, and Ms. Ina Kileva, the Executive Director of the Bulgarian Association of Music Producers, for their remarkable achievements, the Ambassador underscored the importance of protecting intellectual property, and emphasized the fundamental impact on humanity that these works of human invention and creativity have on our lives. Faced by daunting challenges and physical intimidation, the Ambassador added that through intelligence, intellect, and courage, these two women have significantly advanced the cause of IPR. The event was hosted by the Business Software Alliance in Bulgaria.



In the News

Sofia University Students Treated to Town Hall Visit by Ambassador McEldowney

Covering a wide range of issues from military partnerships to energy security, Ambassador McEldowney conducted a Town Hall meeting at the renowned "Aula" auditorium on April 29 at Sofia University. In front of over 200 students and covered by the Bulgarian press, the Ambassador gave a brief overview of the Strategic Bilateral Partnership between the U.S. and Bulgaria, which was followed by a very interactive question and answer period with the audience. The students asked varied and challenging questions, as their interests ranged from Bulgaria's political and economic future, to opportunities to study in the U.S. The Ambassador saluted the students on their candor, and greeted them personally at the event's conclusion.



U.S. Peace Corps/Bulgaria and the Ministry of Economy and Energy Work Together



Peace Corps Director for Bulgaria, Lesley Duncan, and Minister of Economy and Energy Petar Dimitrov signed an Agreement on Cooperation between the U.S. Peace Corps and the Bulgarian Ministry of Economy and Energy on Tuesday, April 7. The agreement provides for supporting the two parties' common goals of assisting local organizations and community groups by increasing their capacity to address local needs through human capital development, organizational strengthening, networking, and involvement in civil society.

Българи и американци летят заедно в "Безмер" и "Ново село"

Първият етап на учението "Среца през пролетта" бе на авиобаза "Безмер", вояриет - на ползване "Ново село". Самолетните упражнения го 30 април. Задачи по бойно търсене и спасяване на катастролирани пилоти във вражеска среда, както и тактическа приватизация и маневри на въздушен бой се изпълняваха в хода на учението. Това съобщиха на брифинга, с който започна медийният ден, полковник Димитър Давев, командир на авиобаза "Безмер". В съвместните полети участват американски изпитателни ескадрили със самолети A-10, самолети Су-25 от авиобаза "Безмер", МиГ-21 и МиГ-20 от авиобаза "Граф Игнатиев" и вертолетите "Куар" от вертолётна авиобаза "Крумово". Целите на съвместните полети "Среца през април 2009" са да се повиши подготовката на



На площадката в авиобаза "Безмер" експозиция от самолетите, които полетят.



Governor and Local Mayors Attend Embassy-Sponsored Forum in Sliven to Discuss Joint Military Facilities

On April 13, U.S. Embassy Sofia representatives from the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and the Public Affairs Section met with the Regional Governor, Hristina Cholakova, and a dozen local mayors to discuss the impact that joint military facilities in the area will have in the region. LCDR Jake Daystar from ODC provided an overview of on-going and planned training and construction projects, and then answered specific questions on the mayors' concerns regarding employment opportunities for citizens as well as procedures for bidding on contracts. This event was one in a string of outreach events that have enhanced communications and understanding between the U.S. military and the local populations where joint bases are located.

Charge d'Affaires Alexander Karagiannis Visits the University of National and World Economy

On April 2, Chargé d'Affaires Alexander Karagiannis spoke to a group of university students majoring in International Relations, at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, on the topic of "Bulgarian-American Strategic Partnership: A Personal Perspective."

He visited the university at the invitation of the International Relations Research Student Association. After his presentation he had a meeting with the Rector Mr. Borissov to discuss opportunities for future cooperation between the university and the U.S. Embassy.



In the News

Charge d'Affaires Karagiannis: "Reporting Large Cash Transactions is the Only Way to Follow the Money"

On April 7, Charge d'Affaires Alexander Karagiannis participated in the Balkan Trust for Democracy funded "Money Laundering Related to Human Trafficking Conference" which took place at the National Investigation Service in Sofia. In his opening remarks, the Chargé emphasized that fighting human trafficking is a U.S. priority, pointing out that the United States views trafficking as a "grave violation of human rights," an "affront to human dignity," and a "transnational criminal threat." Mr. Karagiannis said that the Government of Bulgaria should take "simple, yet aggressive measures" by adopting legislation envisaging full reporting of cash transactions exceeding 30,000 leva, restoring the full legal authority to the Financial Intelligence Directorate within DANS, and strengthening this country's asset forfeiture legislation.



Read the speech [here](#).



First English Language Scrabble® Tournament in Sofia

Twenty-four Bulgarian English language students competed in the First English Language Scrabble® Tournament at the American Corner in Sofia on April 13. Students from the First English Language and German Language high schools in Sofia tested their knowledge of English by making words with lettered tiles, with all competitors required to follow the official rules of Scrabble®. Consular Officer Sarah Stewart and English Language Fellow Tracy Vancura were some of the judges who volunteered their time to support the competition. Fulbright Exchange teachers Violeta Tsoneva, who taught in Arizona during the 2004-2005 school year, and Carolyn Emigh, who currently teaches English at First English Language High School, organized the tournament with support from the American Embassy and the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission. Winners were Toni Oparanov- first place, Ivan Petkov – second place and Kiril Surchev – third place.

"Direct Hit" Rocks Bulgarian Audiences with Three Concerts



"Direct Hit," a rock band made up of members of the United States Air Forces in Europe Band played three concerts in Bulgaria from April 24-26. Crowds were treated to rock hits from the 60's to today including "Lucky" by Jason Mraz, "Valerie" by Amy Winehouse, and "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" by James Brown. The concerts in Kardzhali, Yambol and Veliko Turnovo were free and the audiences were left dancing in their seats and cheering for more. The band's concert in Veliko Turnovo was broadcast

live on the local Evrocom Cable Channel. The concert was made possible thanks to the commander of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe Gen. Roger Brady who wanted to thank Bulgaria for being such an important ally to the United States of America.

Web Chat with Public Affairs Officer Katherine Ingmanson



On April 9, Public Affairs Officer Katherine Ingmanson hosted a webchat to answer questions about the United States, U.S.-Bulgaria relations, and what it is like to serve as an American Diplomat in Bulgaria.

Read the transcript of the web chat [here](#).

Transparency International (TI) Founder Peter Eigen Addresses Bulgarian Chapter

On April 23, TI founder Prof. Peter Eigen addressed a TI-Bulgaria conference dedicated to enhancing the capacity of civil society to influence anti-corruption policies at local and national levels. Peter Eigen discussed the role of civil society as a guarantor of transparency and integrity in the work of the government institutions. He said that the real solution in the fight against corruption should come within society, and that civil society organizations and the media have an important role to play in this fight.



In the Spotlight

Peace Corps Volunteer Introduces Debating Skills to Bulgarian Students

Inspired by a visit by the Cultural Attaché from the Public Affairs Section, Peace Corps Volunteer Ben Marshall embarked on the improbable journey of creating a Debate Club at the Haskovo Youth Center. Despite the challenges of explaining the virtues of a Debate Club and the lack of previous debate experience, Ben convinced the students, who come from Haskovo and the surrounding area, of the virtues of debate as a great tool for knowledge building and teamwork. His efforts have paid off as four debaters, and Ben, will have the honor to represent Bulgaria at the 2009 IDEA Youth Forum and Karl Popper Debate Championships in Bosnia and Herzegovina this summer. There they will compete, train, and share culture with debaters and coaches from five continents.



USAID Legacy Is Building Bridges Between Educational Institutions and Employers



Gergana Rakovska is an alum of a Georgetown University program (2000–2001) and the manager of the Business Foundation for Education. The Foundation is a legacy of USAID and a partner for initiatives of the Ministry of Education and Social Science in the field of career development, practical education through internships, bridging the gap between educational institutions and employers. As a result of the efforts of the USAID Labor Market Project, continued by the Foundation, more than 1000 people were trained as career counselors and started to serve as mediators between educational system and labor market.

Dr. James Hollenbeck Receives Highest Award from Sofia University

On March 12, Dr. James E. Hollenbeck, Indiana University Southeast (USA) and a Fulbright Associate Professor at the Department of Physical Chemistry, University of Sofia, was awarded with the Distinguished Medal of Merit of the University of Sofia for his outstanding work in Science Education Research in Bulgaria. This award was made possible through a resolution of the Council of the Faculty of Chemistry. The medal was presented by Dr. T. Spassov, Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry, in recognition for Dr. Hollenbeck's contribution to the project, "The Integration and Implementation of Constructivist Teaching Methodology in Bulgarian Secondary Science Education". The research team in the Faculty of Chemistry is hoping to expand their studies to the rest of the country to revitalize secondary school science education.



American Blues to Sound in NDK

The American Embassy is proud to announce that American Blues Guitarist and singer Steve James will be the special guest at a free concert on May 13th at 7pm at the NDK.

He will be joined by Bluegrass band Lilly of the West as part of the "Salon des Arts" celebration. The Sofia performance will close the tour around Bulgaria, following the concerts in Pleven, Varna, and Plovdiv.

Come out to Hall 6 of the NDK on May 13th at 7pm for a fantastic celebration of American Blues and Country music. Seats are limited.

Upcoming Events:

May 14, 16:00: Webchat with the famous journalist Barry Hillenbrand on the topic of *Elections and the Role of Journalism*

Please Note:

May 1-6: The U.S. Embassy will be closed.

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